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June 6, 2002

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street SW  
Washington DC 20554

**Re: WT Docket No. 01-146, Low Power Operations in the 450-470 MHz Band**  
***Ex Parte Communication***

Dear Ms. Dortch:

Pursuant to Section 1.1206(a)(2) of the Commission's Rules, I am filing this letter electronically to report an oral ex parte communication in the above-referenced proceeding.

Yesterday, Larry Sears of Hexagram, Inc. and I met with Genevieve Augustin, John J. Borkowski, Peter J. Daronco, Tom Eng, and Brian Marengo of the Commission's staff. We explained the public interest in data transmission on UHF channels, and asked the Commission to implement the specifics outlined in Hexagram's pleadings of October 12, 2001, and November 13, 2001.

Attached is a document we made available relating to certain of Hexagram's recent activities.

If there are questions about this submission, please call me at the number above.

Respectfully submitted,

Mitchell Lazarus

cc: Meeting participants

## **D.C. Water Utility Installing the Nation's Largest Fixed-network Meter-Reading System**

### ***Hexagram STAR System Will Serve 125,000 Water Customers in District of Columbia***

CLEVELAND, April XX, 2002 -- Hexagram, Inc., the leading supplier of fixed-network Automatic Meter Reading Systems for water utilities, announced that the District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority (DCWASA) is installing the Hexagram STAR<sup>®</sup> Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) System. When installation is completed next year, DCWASA will be the largest water utility in the country to implement system-wide fixed-network meter-reading

The STAR AMR System, which is part of a \$36 million improvement project currently under way at DCWASA, will improve both customer service and utility operations. Because the STAR<sup>®</sup> AMR System provides two reads per day from each of DCWASA's meters, the utility will eliminate call-backs and estimates, control leaks and theft and accelerate billing. In addition, DCWASA will benefit from substantially reduced meter reading costs, improved cash flow, and enhanced management of their distribution system.

According to Paul Bender, CFO for DCWASA, the selection of the STAR system was driven by the desire to provide the highest level of customer benefits, while still reducing operating costs. "With the up-to-date usage information that is automatically provided by the Hexagram system, we can instantly respond to customer inquiries, provide flexible new billing options, and quickly identify unusual usage patterns. Yet, even as we provide these new customer benefits, we will reduce operating costs and be able to pass on the savings to our customers".

Before selecting the STAR system, DCWASA carefully considered other AMR technologies. Hand-held and drive-by systems were rejected because they could only read meters once a month and would not provide the timely, high-resolution data that is automatically available from the STAR system. Also, these systems were difficult to justify because of high ongoing costs. Other fixed-network systems were evaluated, but they did not have the proven field history of the STAR

system. Finally, some fixed-network products provide data on an expensive per-read basis, while others require the use of tall towers which would be difficult to site in Washington's historic areas.

The majority of the meters in the DCWASA system are installed in pits located in lawns. To accommodate these meters, DCWASA selected the STAR Meter Transmission Unit (MTU) that is completely concealed under a non-metallic lid. Other meters are located in pits that are subject to traffic; these sites are equipped with MTUs that mount in the existing steel lid.

Twice each day, the MTU interrogates each meter and transmits usage information over a licensed, UHF radio channel. The MTU transmissions are received by a group of Data Collector Units (DCUs) that provides coverage of the DCWASA service area. These self-contained, solar-powered collectors are placed on the roofs of public buildings, and are generally not visible from the street. The DCUs gather and store the meter reading data, and utilize the public cell phone network to automatically transfer the information to the utility's billing and customer service systems.

Hexagram's use of a licensed, UHF channel means that the STAR MTUs are not subject to interference from the vast number of consumer devices that operate in the unlicensed bands. Also, the use of narrowband technology provides reliable, long-range communications which minimizes the number of data collectors.

DCWASA will complete the upgrade of 105,000 residential customers by the second quarter of next year. In the following year, 20,000 commercial customers will be serviced. Partnering with Hexagram in this program are ABB (meters) and UMI (installation and project management).

## ABOUT HEXAGRAM

Hexagram, Inc. designs and manufactures products for measurement, control, and communications, and is a leading supplier of automatic meter-reading systems. The STAR® fixed network AMR system integrates 30 years of Hexagram product design and manufacturing expertise with the insight gained from 18 years of service to the utility industry. Hexagram has produced more than 2 million remote-reading devices for large and small utilities around the world. Recently, the STAR system has gained broad acceptance and has become, by a wide margin, the water industry's most widely installed fixed- network AMR product. Unique among AMR providers, Hexagram operates a completely integrated facility, with in-house hardware/software development, broad manufacturing capabilities, and experienced customer training and support teams. Contact Hexagram at 800-969-1057 or at [star@hexagram.com](mailto:star@hexagram.com).; visit the STAR web site at [www.hexagram.com](http://www.hexagram.com).

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